

## USDA LISTENING SESSIONS ON CHILD NUTRITION

- Good morning/afternoon. My name is Stephen Daniels, MD PhD, and I am Chairman of the Department of Pediatrics, University of Colorado Denver School of Medicine and the Pediatrician in Chief at The Children's Hospital Denver, and a member of the Committee on Nutrition of the American Academy of Pediatrics. I appreciate this opportunity to offer comments today on behalf of the American Academy of Pediatrics.
- The AAP will submit detailed comments to USDA on recommended changes to federal child nutrition programs before the October 15 deadline. I am pleased to offer you an abbreviated version of those comments today.

*General comments applicable to all child nutrition programs*

- **Federal child nutrition programs are a public health intervention.** Our nation should shift its focus to viewing child nutrition as a critical and effective public health intervention that improves the health and welfare of all Americans. Not only does proper nutrition improve the health of individual children, it improves their academic performance and achievement. It can reduce the societal and economic burden of poor health in the form of higher medical costs, lost work and wages, and associated issues.
- **All federal child nutrition programs should follow the Dietary Guidelines for Americans.** USDA should set and enforce uniform national standards for meals that are consistent with the Dietary Guidelines.
- **Federal child nutrition programs must be funded adequately.** The quality of these meals is almost entirely dependent upon the level of resources provided. The AAP urges USDA to request from Congress sufficient funding to allow for appropriate reimbursement for meals, as well as providing healthy foods through commodities and similar programs.  
Significant increases in reimbursement will likely be necessary simply to keep nutrition programs operating at their current levels. The skyrocketing cost of food, fuel and transportation is translating to major increases in costs for food service programs. Many are being forced to rely more heavily on sales of nutritionally inferior ala carte foods to help underwrite costs. If reimbursement levels are inadequate, these and related factors will result in programs inevitably being unable to fulfill nutritional goals and recommendations.

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- **More research and data is needed.** Particularly as programs are expanded or changed, USDA must ensure that they are studied and monitored appropriately to ensure that they are achieving their goals and to provide the data needed for further refinements.

*Program-specific comments*

- With regard to **WIC**, the AAP recently issued a new policy statement that recommends giving reduced-fat milk to children age 1-2 year in cases where there is a family history or documented risk of obesity. The AAP urges that adjustments be made to the WIC food packages to allow for the provision of reduced fat rather than whole milk in these limited cases.
- On the **Child and Adult Care Food Program** -- based on their similar eligibility guidelines, USDA should consider making all children who participate in the WIC program categorically eligible for CACFP.
- USDA should examine the meal patterns under the **Summer Food Program**. Serving sizes may not be appropriate for children of all ages, and there is wide variation in the caloric and nutritional content of some foods that are considered equivalent or alternatives to each other (for example, muffins, cornbread, rolls, cereal, and pasta.)
- On the **Fresh Fruit and Vegetable Snack Program**, the AAP encourages USDA to study and evaluate the major expansion of this program that is about to take place. While AAP fully supports and applauds this expansion, it should be monitored to ensure that the expected behavioral and nutritional changes are taking place.
- Finally, the AAP reiterates our call for all milk served in all federally-funded child nutrition programs to be reduced-fat, and this certainly applies to the **Special Milk Program**.
- In conclusion, our nation must recast any debate about school nutrition programs, shifting our focus simply from the basic relief of hunger or social welfare to a broader view that encompasses the full public health implications of food insecurity, overweight and undernourishment and all of their associated short- and long-term implications. Child nutrition programs have a critical role to play in the current and future health of our nation's children. However, adequate funding is the only means of ensuring optimal quality and nutrition in these programs. The AAP urges the USDA to utilize the 2005 Dietary Guidelines to shape nutrient and commodity policy in these vital programs.
- Thank you.